

## **MINUTES**

**Purpose:** Engage Okaloosa County community members in a health improvement process through an open, two-way dialogue to reduce the number of adults engaged in substance use.

**Attendees:** Petra Maddens, Florida Department of Health in Okaloosa County (DOH-Okaloosa); Emily Pickens, DOH-Okaloosa; Lauren Anzaldo, Gulf Coast Veterans Health Care System; Amanda Colwell, DOH-Okaloosa; Kelsi Gulig, Lifeview Group; Emily King, Gulf Coast Sexual Assault Program; Jenna McElyea, Bridgeway Center; Elizabeth Smith, DOH-Okaloosa; Stephanie Wedel, Freedom Life Compass; Michael Jacobs, Shalimar Police Department; Ken LaPee, Okaloosa County Sherriff; Larry McFarland, Bridgeway Center; Chris Carter, Fort Walton Beach Police Department; Emily Morgan, DOH-Okaloosa; Remeeka Wilson, Bridgeway Center; Candi Buttke, Bridgeway Center; Cozette Costanza, Bridgeway Center; Brent Couch, Simply Healthcare; Joseph Kearns, Niceville Police Department; Michael Whitfield, Niceville Police Department; Ginger Madden, SAO; Vanessa d'Aquin, Crossroads Center; Jamie Ross, Fort Walton Beach Police Department; Shelia Fitzgerald, Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners

### **Welcome & Introductions – Elizabeth “Beth” Smith**

- Beth opened the meeting and welcomed attendees. She reviewed the meeting's purpose and agenda, she also reviewed results from the Community Engagement Survey from the previous meeting. 7 responses, positive responses. Attendees felt that there was good discussion, their opinions were valued, and there was enough time for all agenda items.
- Minutes from the October 9, 2023, meeting was reviewed and approved.

### **Action Plan Updates – Emily Pickens**

#### **Pre-Arrest Diversion Discussion**

- Emily Pickens opened discussion by informing attendees how the group was formed. Emily shared the group focuses on reintegration, but discussed in April how Okaloosa County has many resources for those who have already entered the criminal justice system. Therefore, members decided to focus efforts on providing resources individuals before and/or in the initial phases of interaction with the criminal justice system.
- Emily invited State Attorney Ginger Madden to share details on the new pre-arrest diversion (PAD) program in Escambia County.
  - Ms. Madden explained that the program is expected to launch in Escambia County on January 1<sup>st</sup>. Her office plans to implement the program into all counties in Circuit One. She explained Walton County is expected to follow Escambia next, with Okaloosa potentially launching afterwards.
  - Emily asked if they considered adding a behavioral health component.

- Ms. Madden shared if the program is successful in Escambia County, they may explore opportunities to incorporate behavioral health services in the future. This could potentially include anger management, drug counseling, or other services that would be appropriate for the charge.
- Ms. Madden emphasized that in the beginning the program will only be available to low level misdemeanors and nonviolent crimes.
  - Initially, the program will also be limited to first-time offenders, and there will be no fees other than the \$25 clerk fee and a cost of prosecution fee.
- She added that program roll out in Okaloosa County would include an emphasis on underage possession of alcohol, due to arrest trends.
- Ken LaPee asked if the program would be beneficial, as many of those arrests are tourists, rather than residents. Ms. Madden stated the program would be open to tourists. They will be required to pay the minor fees like other participants and would provide proof of community service hours from their state of residence. Staff from her office would follow up to ensure requirements are met.

### **Unite Us**

- Ken LaPee expressed this program would not include a large majority of our homeless, mentally ill, and drug-addicted populations, as they would not qualify since many would not be first-time offenders. Emily transitioned discussion to Unite Us, as it would be applicable to all community members, including via self-referral.
- Emily reminded members that Unite Us is a referral system that serves as a guide of referring and tracking individuals for various community, medical, and social services.
  - She shared ideally, there would be a case manager in charge of making sure referred individuals are followed up with.
- Attendees discussed interest and benefits of the program. Ken LaPee and Larry McFarland questioned whether Unite Us would translate with the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) or other existing systems.
  - Emily will inquire with the vendor.
- Emily asked organizations to share whether they find Unite Us to be beneficial, in order to move forward. Members agreed. Emily will work on next steps.

### **First Responder Briefings**

- Emily shared the latest draft of the First Responder Briefings. The briefing includes a PowerPoint with community resources and a two-page handout with key information.
  - Jenna McElyea requested edits to their slides regarding Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) versus detox.
  - Vanessa d'Aquin requested counseling services be added for slides regarding Crossroads Center. She emphasized Crossroads Center is free for patients.
  - Ken LaPee stated he'd love for the briefings to also be giving to the communication officers as well. Emily responded saying the group would be glad to share the information with anyone who is interested.

**Action Items – Stephanie Wedel**

- Emily stated she will move forward with Unite Us.
- Emily and Stephanie Wedel will reach out to law enforcement regarding responder resource briefings to schedule time(s) and date(s).

**Open Discussion – All**

- Freedom Life Compass has a Breakfast with Santa event on December 9<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 a.m. at Crosspoint Church in Niceville. It costs \$15 per child or no more than \$50 per family.
- Bridgeway Center has an International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day event at their Fort Walton Beach office from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Anyone who has lost a friend, loved one, or family member to suicide is welcome to attend.
- Fresh Start has a fundraiser called Emerald Coast Princess Ball on December 2<sup>nd</sup> on 17 Industrial Street in Fort Walton starting at 6:00 p.m.

**Closing – Emily Pickens**

- Emily motioned to cancel the next meeting and instead host a joint meeting with the Healthy Communities OCHIP group on December 12<sup>th</sup>. The meeting will discuss opioid abatement funds available through the county.
- Emily thanked attendees for participating and asked them to complete the meeting evaluation form to provide feedback.

*Next Meeting – January 11<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 a.m. at Crosspoint Church in Niceville*

<b>Action Items</b>	<b>Owners</b>	<b>Deadline</b>	<b>Status</b>
Reach out to Unite Us regarding purchasing for Okaloosa County	Emily Pickens	Next meeting	In Progress
Determine time and dates of law enforcement briefings	Emily Pickens & Stephanie Wedel	Next meeting	In Progress
Invite other relevant partners to next meeting	All	Next meeting	Ongoing